



MEDIA RELEASE

EASTSIDE CARJACKING & GANG FIGHT TWO SUSPECTS IN CUSTODY

SANTA BARBARA, CA – May 2, 2012

On April 29, 2012, at 10:55 p.m., officers from the Santa Barbara Police Department responded to the intersection of Punta Gorda Street and Canada Street on a call of a roll over traffic collision involving a single vehicle. Witnesses to the incident reported hearing some yelling that sounded "gang related." Upon arrival officers found a black four-door Infinity on its side at the intersection. It appeared that the vehicle struck a telephone pole support cable which caused it to roll onto its side. The occupants of the Infinity fled before police arrived.

About fifteen minutes later the owner of the Infinity called police to report that the vehicle had been carjacked from her in the vicinity of the lower Eastside. The victim was unhurt and the crime appears to be a strong-arm carjacking. The victim provided suspect descriptions and the area was searched, but to no avail. A stolen vehicle report was taken.

On April 30, 2012, at 12:05 a.m., the Santa Barbara Police Department's Combined Communications Center received reports of possible shots fired and a second traffic collision on 1100 East Mason Street. Officers responded and found that the involved vehicle, a black Ford SUV, was heavily damaged but with very little of the damage appearing to be related to the collision. The collision looked to be a slow speed roll away or unattended vehicle type of collision. A description of suspects seen leaving the scene of the collision was broadcast and Officer Tiffany Keller observed the suspects and attempted to stop them. A foot pursuit ensued and ultimately Officer Keller captured Ernesto Gil Lopez, age 23, and transported him to the Police Station. There was no evidence there of a shooting.

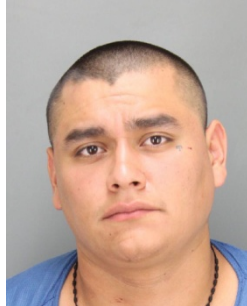
Witnesses and Officer Bruno Peterson saw other possible suspects from the 1100 East Mason Street crash run into a residence on 1300 East Mason Street. One of the witnesses reported that one of the people seen running might have been shot. Officers established a perimeter around the residence and shortly thereafter Augustine Cruz, age 21, tried to flee. He was found hiding under some vines in the creek bed at the west end of Salinas Place. Cruz refused to come out of hiding or to show officers his hands. Because there had been a report of shots fired and a possible gunshot wound victim, Officer Tyler Larson and K-9 Hondo were deployed to arrest Cruz. Cruz would not comply with orders and subsequently was bitten by K-9 Hondo. Cruz was found to have a stab wound to his abdomen. Cruz refused to tell officers the details of how he got stabbed. Cruz was treated at Cottage Hospital and then transported to the police station for further investigation.

Investigation indicates that the second collision is related to a fight that occurred near Mason Street and Soledad Street. It appears that is where Cruz got stabbed.

Both Lopez and Cruz are known Eastside Gang members. Both were booked at Santa Barbara County Jail for the misdemeanor of resisting or delaying an officer. Additionally, Lopez was booked for violation of parole. The investigation into the carjacking and other aspects of these cases, including whether these incidents are related, is still ongoing.



Lopez, Ernesto Gil



Cruz, Augustine

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